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ABSTRACT

Many difficulties exist in establishing defensible educational objectives on the basis of student and community needs. Needs assessment strategies differ in subject matter, not in method. Preference, or data collection, is the first phase followed by an evaluation of actual conditions. The strategies concentrate on the "needs" of desire. Preference data will not enable educators to determine defensible goals. Six concepts of "need" to be analyzed are obligation, subsistence, required means, useful means, "need" of desire and of conative dispositions. Only certain "needs" have ethical implications about what ought to be done. Every need of desire does not have to be fulfilled. The authors conclude that since prominent needs-assessment strategies rely mainly on needs of desire, they cannot determine defensible educational objectives. Different techniques and principles must be incorporated into the strategies to determine defensible goals. The prominent strategies must be modified to establish defensible educational goals. The ultimate worth of an educational program depends on the worth of its objectives. The authors feel the prominent needs assessment strategies are in urgent need of modification and reform. (DWH)

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STUDIES IN EVALUATION AND DECISION MAKING

Work Unit 3:

Philosophic Inquiry Into Evaluation

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DEFENSIBLE EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND NEEDS-ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

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Introduction

Educational evaluators and curriculum specialists at both the state and local levels have most often been contacted in order to develop programs which will enable students to meet certain objectives or to determine whether existing programs have succeeded in meeting pre-specified objectives. Rarely have evaluators and curriculum specialists been explicitly called upon to assist in the formation of educational objectives. As a result, evaluators and curriculum specialists have become increasingly intent on determining the success (or failure) of a program, but have not seen it as their task to formulate and defend the objectives of those programs.

Recently, however, many educators have indicated that it is of small consequence whether or not a program succeeds if we are in doubt as to the worth or value of the objectives attained from the program's success. Therefore, if evaluation is to benefit education, it must begin by addressing the question of which objectives are worthy of pursuit in education. Michael Scriven has written that:

> ...evaluation proper must include as an equal partner with the measuring of performance against intended goals, procedures for the evaluation of the goals. That is, if it is to have any reference to such goals at all. (1973, p. 73)

James Popham also stresses the importance of the evaluator's role in determining the worth of educational objectives. He writes that:

> the real obstacle is deciding on <u>which</u> objectives should be pursued. Because, as we have seen, evaluators are concerned with determining the worth of educational phenomena, they are called upon to help assess the merits of competing instructional goals. (1975, p. 65)

The concern on the part of educators for a systematic and thorough investigation of the worth of competing educational objectives has led to

a great deal of discussion about the manner in which educational objectives can be justified. In other words, in what way can we, as educators, determine defensible educational objectives?

The conclusion that many educators, evaluators, and curriculum specialists have reached is that the basis for determining defensible educational objectives should be the needs of the students and the community. Fulfilling student and community needs, it is argued, has always been the legitimate purpose of education. Therefore, evaluators can justifiably establish educational objectives by showing that those objectives will meet the needs, say, of the students, the community, and the society at large (Hopkins & Antes, 1978; Tyler, 1976; Popham, 1975; Gagné & Briggs, 1974; Krathwohl, 1973; Stake, 1973 & 1978; Alkin, 1969).

> The aims or goals to be attained by students should be based on and generated from the needs of students. The goals which are set for students either individually or collectively are based on the needs to be served by the process of education and become the objectives. (Hopkins & Antes, 1978, p. 4)

> Most of the designs we have for evaluation start with objectives given. I say, let us go beyond that responsibility and see whether or not we can find a match-up between needs of the community, or the nation, and this project. (Stake, 1973, p. 314)

> When goals are matched with societal needs, the ideal condition exists for the planning of a total program of education. Were such an undertaking to be attempted, the result would be, as a first step, a list of human activities, each of which would have associated with it an estimate of its importance in meeting the needs of society. (Gagné & Briggs, 1974, p. 31)

What these authors are advocating is that evaluators ought to contribute to the process of establishing defensible educational objectives by developing and carrying out an assessment of the community's needs. The needs-assessment strategies which these people recommend are to be used as diagnostic and discovery tools, tools which will enable educators to

determine the needs of the students and their community. Having determined existing needs, they (the evaluators) will then be in a position to delimit the educational objectives--i.e., identify the needs and you will then know what constitutes defensible educational objectives.

Our purpose in writing this paper is to point out the various difficulties in establishing defensible educational objectives on the basis of student and community needs. It is our intention to carefully delineate the typical needs-assessments proposed for this task and to show that certain distinctions must be made in such approaches if they are to succeed. We will show that <u>various kinds</u> of needs do exist, but that only some play a central role in the formation of defensible educational objectives. We will also show that the needs-assessment strategies which currently exist for the express purpose of determining the most defensible or relevant educational needs will not work. For we will show (in Sections II and III) that the strategies proposed only address one possible kind of need. The students and their communities may have various kinds of needs. Therefore, we will argue that educators must be aware of the existence of many different kinds of needs. Only then will they be in a position to establish defensible educational objectives through needs-assessments.

I. Needs-Assessment Strategies

There are various needs-assessment strategies currently in vogue. However, they differ only in subject matter and not in method. While some needs-assessments are used for identifying social problems, some for specific academic areas of concern, and some for values clarification, the

method for determining the needs is essentially the same (Morris & Bank, 1977; Popham, 1975; Gagne & Briggs, 1974; Klein, 1971).

The first step in the needs-assessment strategy involves preference (or desires) data collection. The needs-assessor asks the students, the community members, and the school staff what activities they would like to see taking place in the school. In the following passage, James Popham describes the first step:

> The most popular needs assessment models emphasize the accumulation of a considerable amount of preference data, typically from a variety of clienteles, such as pupils, teachers, and parents. This preference data deals with which educational goals various groups would most like to see a given instructional system achieve. (1975, p. 65)

The first step, that of preference data collection, is common to most needs-assessment materials. For example, in the CSE revised needs-assessment kit, the values clarification technique and the problem snapshot approach focus on different kinds of needs, yet both strategies include preference data collection as the first step in identifying those needs.

> The values clarification technique invites adults to speculate about what they value most highly as qualities in themselves and in their children. These values form a philosophical point of view about what attributes the school should foster. (Morris & Bank, 1977, p. 1)

> The problem snapshot approach presumes that when people describe school related problems, they perceive a situation which is at variance with what they desire. (Morris & Bank, 1977, p. 1)

However, even from these two perspectives, preference data alone will not reveal needs because it may turn out that what the constituents desire, want, or prefer is already actually taking place in the schools. To determine whether or not these desires have been met, the needs-assessor must go one step further. His next assignment is to determine the actual conditions present in the schools. James Popham (1973) describes this procedure in the following passage:

> By first identifying what kinds of learner behavior we desire, then contrasting the learner's current behavior with what we desire, we can identify the gap between what we want and what we have. Generally, this difference is referred to as an educational need. (p. 4)

If there is a discrepancy between the preferences of the constituents and the actual state of affairs, then the needs-assessor has succeeded in identifying an educational need. In other words, a discrepancy between the students' present achievement level, say, in mathematics, and the desired level of achievement in mathematics constitutes an educational need. James Popham presents the needs-assessment strategy very clearly in the following diagram: (1975, p. 65)

Desired Status of Learners	minus	Current Status of Learners	equals	An educational need

In his article, "Choosing Needs for Needs Assessment," Stephen P. Klein (1971) points out that once the discrepancies between desired states of affairs and current states of affairs have been identified, the needs-assessor(s) must determine which of these discrepancies constitute the most important needs--i.e., which needs must take priority in education, given physical, temporal, and economic limitations?

> Although there are a number of important procedural differences between conducting needs assessments at different levels in the educational system, all needs assessment should include four basic activities:
>
> 1. Listing the full range of possible goals (or objectives) that might be involved in the needs assessment.
> 2. Determining the relative importance of the goals (or objectives).
> 3. Assessing the degree to which the important goals (or objectives) are being achieved by the program (i.e., identifying discrepancies between desired and actual performance).

4. Determining which of the discrepancies between present and desired performance are the ones most important to correct. (Klein, 1971, pp. 1-2)

However, Klein, unlike Popham, maintains that a needs-assessment would run more smoothly if a team of experts, rather than the constituents, were called upon to construct the "full range of possible goals" (Step 1). Once the goal construction process has been completed, the needs-assessor should collect preference data from the constituents. The preference data will serve to disclose the "relative importance" which the constituents assign to the goals presented in the experts' list. In Klein's model, preference data do not disclose the goals; they disclose the "relative importance" of the pre-specified goals (Step 2).

> In other words, the strategy we are proposing is to have experts construct the full range of potential goals that might be included, and then to achieve community, student, and teacher involvement by having these groups participate in the selection of the goals which will be examined in the needs assessment. (Klein, 1971, p. 3)

Klein continues with his account of needs-assessments by describing what the outcomes of a needs-assessment should look like when one has carefully followed his 4-step procedure. The third step of Klein's procedure is quite similar to the procedure presented in Popham's diagram. Klein claims that the needs-assessor, having accumulated the preference data from his constituents, should now determine, for each particular goal, whether a discrepancy exists between the goals and the respective actual state of affairs. The result should be a score for each goal--a score which reflects the size of the discrepancy between the preference score assigned to that goal and the score assigned to the corresponding actual state of affairs (Step 4).

> Whatever the technique chosen, however, the end result should provide a score for each goal in the whole set. This score indicates that goal's relative priority to the other goals. In short, the scores reflect the value system of the people who rate the goals. (Klein, 1971, p. 7)

One can foresee many problems arising in that part of the needs-assessment strategy which requires that a numerical value be assigned to the degree of desire and to the actual state of affairs (see Ellett, in press). It will be difficult to ensure that the numerical values assigned will accurately reflect how seriously the constituents regard particular preferences or goals.

However, our concern in this paper will not be directed at that aspect of the needs-assessment strategy. Rather, our concern will be to determine whether the needs-assessment strategy, as presently conceived, can succeed in arriving at "truly defensible goals"; for that is the central purpose of an educational needs-assessment. It will serve us well to keep in mind Popham's introduction to the topic. In setting out the purpose of educational needs-assessments, he writes the following:

> If teachers become more skilled at achieving changes in learners, what kinds of changes <u>should</u> they pursue? Putting it another way, what kinds of goals <u>should</u> our teachers be trying to accomplish? An increase in a teacher's instructional skill makes it more imperative that he or she pursue <u>truly defensible goals</u>. (1973, p. 2, emphasis added)

The whole strategy of determining defensible educational objectives, according to the evaluators and curriculum specialists cited, logically depends upon certain desires or preferences expressed in need-claims. We will question whether the present needs-assessment strategies, having such a basis or foundation, can be used to derive defensible educational goals. In the following section, we will point out the various kinds of needs which may exist, and we will discuss some of the problems which are

likely to arise as a result of confusing or conflating one kind of need with another. It is our intention to show that needs-assessment strategies, as presently conceived, may well lead educators to overlook many needs which they can ill-afford to overlook. We will show that something more than preference data collection is required for justifying and defending claims about what ought to be pursued in education. Preference data, alone, will not enable educators to determine defensible goals.

II. Need-Claims and Their Implications

The more proficient educators become at designing curriculum and the more proficient teachers become at transmitting the content of that curriculum, the greater the need for determining what ought to be the content--i.e., what ought to be taught and accomplished by the schools. Educators must decide what content and methods ought to be incorporated in the schools, but the decision is a difficult one to make. Yet a decision is necessary because there are too many alternative courses of action, and, often, some of them turn out to be incompatible. Thus determining defensible goals is indeed an important task.

It appears that a plausible starting point for making a defensible decision about curriculum content and program objectives has come from educators who maintain that the job of the schools is to fulfill the needs of the students and the community (Hopkins & Antes, 1978; Gagné & Briggs, 1974; Stake, 1973; Alkin, 1969). Finding what the students and the community need would enable educators to establish a curriculum which would address those needs.

The question of whether student needs ought to be fulfilled never arises. In fact, the mere mention of the possibility that student needs

ought to remain unmet sounds absurds. We all take for granted that what is needed ought to be done, and hardly anyone assumes that we ought to do what is not needed. The concern for fulfilling student and community needs reflects the belief that we ought to help those who need it. It is this belief that lends plausibility to the claim that the purpose of education is fulfilling student needs.

However, we will show that there are various kinds of need-claims, not all of which imply that those needs ought to be fulfilled. Not all needs are educational. To find those needs which really constitute educational needs is the challenge educators must face. The educator's task is to determine which student needs are educational needs, and which of those educational needs ought to be met. Such a task can only be undertaken when one has a clear understanding of the implications derived from the existence of the various kinds of needs.

In showing that there may be various kinds of needs, we will also show that it becomes difficult to fully understand the need-claims that people make without knowing more about the precise way in which they are using the term "need." Since it is the students, the community members, and the school staff who are most often asked to discuss the needs of concern, it is important that the evaluator and the constituents be aware of the implications of the various claims of need. We have good reason to use caution because many educational evaluators and curriculum specialists have focused on only one kind of need-claim to the exclusion of others.

There are important reasons for analyzing the various concepts of "need" which may enter into the decision-making processes of educators: First, distinguishing among the various senses of "need" will foster better

understanding of various need-claims and of the conditions under which they may be validated. Second, an analysis of "need" will highlight the logical structure of need-claims: i.e., from an analysis of "need," we should be in a better position to discern those needs which are urgent and those which form defensible educational goals.

The six concepts of "need" to be analyzed are the following: (1) the "need" of obligation; (2) the "need" of subsistence; (3) the "need" of required means; (4) the "need" of useful means; (5) the "need" of desire; and (6) the "need" of conative dispositions. Our analysis will be drawn in part from the writings of philosophers who have dealt with the topic, although we have added correctives to their work.

"Need" of Obligation

The "need" of obligation is of four types: (1) to have a moral obligation--e.g., "George needs to keep his promise" or "Persons need respect"; (2) to have a legal obligation--e.g., "30% of the students of School A need to be bussed to School B"; (3) to have an obligation derived from a rule--e.g., "Students need to (must) eat lunch on campus"; and (4) to have an obligation to follow the rules of practical reasoning--e.g., "The judge needs to draw this conclusion from the evidence."

"Needs" which imply a moral obligation imply that there is some ethical principle(s) which requires persons to perform (or refrain from performing) some action. The claim "George needs to keep his promise" implies that there is some ethical principle(s) which prescribes this action. Because it is a case of promise-keeping, one has a right to conclude that George has placed himself under an obligation--in these circumstances, he needs to keep his promise.

In cases where we claim that human beings need respect, the obligation is not placed on the persons who have the need, but, rather, rests with the persons who are to ensure that those needs (rights) are met. To claim that persons need respect is to claim that we ought to respect others. It is logically true in such cases that we ought to do what is needed. Put in this latter form, the need-claim implies much the same thing as that of promise-keeping. The only difference is that the obligation is not incurred by any action on the part of the person(s) who needs the respect. We will return to this sense of "need" later to show that these needs play a central role in the justification of defensible educational objectives.

"Needs" which imply a legal obligation imply that the need is something required or forbidden by a law. That state law on bussing, for example, does not imply that bussing is a necessary means to desegregation. There are other ways in which desegregation may be brought about. The point is that the schools are obligated to engage in a bussing plan because state laws mandate that they do so. (Of course, one hopes that the law is based on some kind of empirical knowledge). As Paul Taylor writes:

> In each case, the statement is not a statement of the rule or law (which is presupposed), but an assertion of the fact that the something-that-is-needed is required or demanded by the rule or law. (1959, p. 108)

Need-claims which imply obligations of type (3) presuppose that there is a rule which requires that somebody comply with that rule. In some cases, e.g., "Students need to eat lunch on campus," the rule is an institutional rule. In other words, the school requires its students to eat lunch on campus. Each student of that school is thereby obligated to comply with that rule.

The last sense of the "need" of obligation is one which stems from the rules of practical reasoning. To say that the judge needs to reach this conclusion is to say that the rules of logic mandate that this conclusion is the only one which can be validly derived from the evidence. Drawing valid conclusions from arguments is an essential criterion of good practical reasoning, and the obligation on the judge is to comply with that criterion.

One feature common to all senses of the "need" of obligation is that some justification for fulfilling the need is already given--i.e., the moral principles, laws, and/or rules are presupposed. In each case, it is always in order to ask the need-claimer to specify the particular principle or rule.

Notice, however, that in each particular case there may be overriding principles which prescribe that those very needs remain unmet. For example, there may be a case in which a law is morally unjust. In those cases, one may be morally obligated not to fulfill that legal obligation. From cases of this kind, we see that the mere fact that a "need" of obligation exists is not sufficient for concluding that it ought to be fulfilled. Such needs only establish prima facie reasons for their fulfillment. Therefore, one may have to weigh various competing need-claims in those cases of need where we have some justification for concluding that a particular need be fulfilled.

Because of the nature of education, the "need" of moral obligation is central to the formation of defensible educational objectives. Therefore, evaluators must appeal to the needs of moral obligation even in those cases where the need-claims under consideration are not overtly justified on

moral or ethical grounds. For example, the institutional rule that all students must eat lunch on campus may have nothing to do with the educational goals of that institution, but it may be justified on moral grounds, viz., the safety (or physical well-being) of the students. In order to justify the needs of obligation which are not directly derived from moral principles (e.g., legal and institutional obligations), evaluators and curriculum specialists will have to appeal to the needs of moral obligation.

"Need" of Subsistence

The "need" of subsistence refers to a state of affairs in which a person lacks the means for survival or well-being. The expression, "a needy person," connotes destitution or threat to one's well-being. Thus, this sense of "need" is closely related to the moral sense of "need" discussed earlier.

"All students need to learn the basics" and "These students need special education" are need-claims which might plausibly be taken to imply that unless the need is fulfilled, these students will be socially and/or physically deprived. All need-claims of this form imply that the fulfillment of the need is either a necessary or a highly useful means to social and/or physical survival.

For example, parents often argue that if their children do not learn the basics, their children will grow up socially deprived. If these parents are correct, then perhaps these students do lack the means for subsistence. At least we might have good reason for fulfilling these needs. This lack may well create a defensible educational objective.

The need-claim "Joan needs special education" presupposes that Joan will be unable to function at some minimal level unless she receives proper attention. Special education is not a fringe benefit; it is essential for the social and/or physical subsistence of the students who need

it. What comes into question is which form of special education will actually provide the skills that such students lack, not whether eliminating the lack is a defensible objective.

People strongly regard the fulfillment of such needs as obligatory because they implicitly believe that social and/or physical deprivation ought to be prevented whenever possible. These beliefs are derived from principles governing the "needs" of moral obligation. It must be kept in mind, however, that there may be overriding reasons which prevent us from fulfilling even these urgent needs--overriding ethical principles. When no overriding reasons exist, the educational needs of subsistence provide a solid foundation for the formation of defensible educational objectives.

"Need" of Required Means

The "need" of required means refers to a lack of the means necessary for the attainment of some end: e.g., "Anne needs to learn the multiplication tables to pass this test." Three criteria must be satisfied in order for need-claims of this form to be true: (1) There is always some pursued objective--i.e., Anne's passing the test; (2) The object of need is a necessary means to that end--i.e., Anne cannot pass the test unless she knows the multiplication tables; (3) The object of need is either lacking or may fail to be retained--i.e., If it is true that Anne needs to learn her tables, then it follows that she either does not know them or may easily forget what she once learned.

When need-claims of required means are made, the evaluator must show two things to determine whether the need-claims accurately reflect defensible educational goals. First, and most important, the evaluator must

determine the worth of the objective. Second, the evaluator must determine whether the object of need is a necessary means and, in so doing, describe the kind of necessity involved--i.e., empirical or logical.

For educational evaluators, determining the kind of necessity involved in needs-as-requisites is strategically important. The course of action to be taken in fulfilling these needs will depend on the conditions involved in making the object of need a necessary means to the objective. When prescribing courses of action for education, evaluators must know the empirical, as well as the logical, conditions that educators must contend with in order to succeed. Understanding the kinds of necessity involved enables the evaluator to acquire such information.

However, even when the evaluator determines that the need-claim, "S needs X for O," does reflect a means-ends relation of necessity, he has yet to show that X constitutes an educational need. For example, the need-claim, "John needs to learn the probabilities of dice throwing to become an expert backgammon player," may be accurate to the extent that one cannot be an expert player and lack that knowledge. However, the fact that fulfillment of the need is a necessary means to the objective does not entail that the objective is of educational merit. Becoming an expert backgammon player may be a worthwhile objective, but it does not follow that it is an educational objective.

Since educational evaluators have taken it upon themselves to determine those needs which point to defensible educational objectives, an evaluator doing a needs-assessment will have to follow this two-step procedure: First, the evaluator, along with his constituents, must determine whether the pursued state of affairs constitutes a defensible educational objective.

In other words, the evaluator must provide a moral justification which in many instances may amount to showing that the pursued state of affairs is justified because it entails the fulfillment of the needs of moral obligation or the fulfillment of the needs of subsistence. Second, the evaluator must determine what kind of relationship obtains between the need and that objective.

The analysis of "needs" as the means required for certain ends is the one given by most philosopehrs and sociologists (Frankena, 1973; Komisar, 1961; Richards, 1971; Vlastos, 1962). These authors assert that whenever a need constitutes a means to an end, it is a necessary means. In the next section, however, we will show that this is not the case.

"Need" of Highly Useful Means

The "need" of highly useful means is similar to the "need" of required means, so we will treat it briefly. The only distinction between this sense of "need" and the "need" of required means is that the means which are lacking are not a necessary means to the objective, but highly useful.

In short, need-claims of this type imply that there is something lacking which will prove useful for the attainment of the objective. A person making a need-claim of this sort is stating that a certain means will lead to the attainment of some objective. The claimant recognizes that other means exist, yet he is maintaining that that means is comparatively more useful (i.e., most efficient, least costly, least harmful...).

The evaluator concerned with the validity of such need-claims must also follow a two-step procedure similar to the one just mentioned. The only difference is that now the evaluator is not concerned with determining whether the means in question is the only means to some end. Instead, the

evaluator questions (1) whether the end is defensible, and (2) which means is most useful given that end.

"Need" of Desire

The "need" of desire has two senses: (1) 'To need X' is to lack and desire X for-its-own-sake--e.g., "Mary needs a new dress"; and (2) 'To need X' where X is a means to some desired objective, Y--e.g., "The Smiths need to get a piano teacher for their daughter."

One condition common to both senses of the "need" of desire is that the object desired is lacking. However, need-claims of type (1) make no reference to any further objective; whereas the claims of type (2) imply that the need for X is derived from the desire for some objective Y to which X is a means. A second feature common to both senses of the "need" of desire is that typically when one desires X (or X for Y), one is aware of the fact that one has the desire.

The urgency of desires can vary in its intensity, and when a person persists in claiming that he "needs" to attain the object desired, he is doing so in order to convey the importance he attributes to its attainment. He does not simply want X; he wants X a lot. There is a note of urgency conveyed in most claims where one's desires are expressed as needs. When the desire is expressed as a need for something which we consider defensible, the degree of importance attributed to this desire is considered justified.

However, when the worth of the object desired is dubious, one may properly question whether the "need" ought to be fulfilled. In such a case, even if John highly desires X (or X for Y), he still has to give us a reason for fulfilling his need or for allowing him to do so. This becomes especially true in those cases where we have good reason to believe that what John desires is something which ought not to be fulfilled--e.g.,

"John needs to suppress all ethnic groups whose actions threaten his social position" or "John needs to replenish his supply of LSD so that he can get high." The latter is a case in which what John desires may not be in his best interest; the former is a case in which what John desires would clearly violate the rights of others. Thus, there are prima facie reasons for not fulfilling his desires.

In all cases of the "needs" of desire, we must have good reasons for concluding that those needs ought to be fulfilled. The mere fact that someone desires X and that this desire is expressed as a "need" does not so far provide us with either strong or conclusive reasons for fulfilling that need. An object of desire may or may not constitute a defensible objective. Therefore, evaluators must determine whether the object desired is defensible and of educational merit before they prescribe that such needs ought to be fulfilled.

For evaluators concerned with establishing defensible educational objectives, the mere presence of the "needs" of desire will not justify establishing educational objectives on the basis of those needs. In cases where the need-claim does not refer to any objective, but merely to an object desired for-its-own-sake, the evaluator must carefully determine whether the "need" is defensible. Once again, this is likely to involve some appeal to the ethical principles governing the "needs" of moral obligation. In cases where the object claimed to be needed is one which is believed to lead to some desired state of affairs, the evaluator must follow the same two-step procedure as the one discussed earlier.

The evaluator must know whether the desired objective is one which ought to be pursued in education because the mere fact that the objective

is desired is not sufficient for concluding that it is of serious educational concern. Although the need-claimer may derive the importance of fulfilling the need from his desire for the objective, the evaluator must derive the importance of fulfilling the need from the importance of the objective (i.e., its educational relevance and defense).

Typically, when evaluators conduct needs-assessments or advocate that others do so, they focus their attentions exclusively on the "needs" of desire. James Popham, for example, claims that in the "most popular" educational needs-assessments, an educational need "consists of" the following: (1975, p. 65)

Desired Status of Learner	minus	Current Status of Learners	equals	An Educational Need

If evaluators identify educational needs with "unmet desires," then it is certain that those evaluators will overlook all needs which are not the "needs" of desire. Most important, however, is the fact that those evaluators will overlook those very needs which are essential to the formation of defensible educational objectives--the "needs" of moral obligation or subsistence.

"Need" of Conative Dispositions

The "need" of conative dispositions is a sense of "need" most often encountered in the discussions and writings of psychologists, sociologists, and educators who are concerned with the motivation of human behavior. "Children need to feel approval from authority figures," "Teenagers need to prove themselves," "He needs to save face," and "She needs to express anger" are examples fo the "needs" of conative dispositions. B. Paul Komisar provides the following description:

> A need exists as a state of tension in a person which serves to direct his behavior toward certain goals...."Need"...is used as an inclusive term to embrace drives, impulses, goal sets, urges, motives, cravings, desires, wants, and wishes. (1961, p. 33)

Conative dispositions are needs which are more akin to compulsions and drives than to ordinary desires. Of course, a desire can become a conative disposition when it is so strong that the person who has that desire feels compelled to satisfy it and thereby reduce his tension. In other words, conative dispositions are involuntary states of tension--tensions which compel or drive persons to those goals which will reduce those tensions. Conative dispositions also differ from ordinary desires in that, typically, persons are not aware of their needs or conative dispositions. Such needs are often unconscious motivators of behavior.

What ethical implications can be derived from the existence of the "needs" of conative dispositions? Can we determine what ought to be done by discovering that such needs exist? Abraham H. Maslow claims that we can. In his book, Motivation and Personality, Maslow claims that there is a hierarchy of human needs, all of which are dispositions which begin at the lowest rung with man's physiological needs and end at the top with the need for self-actualization.

The important feature of Maslow's theory is that he not only claims that human beings have the "needs" of conative dispositions, he also claims that because human beings have such needs and can fulfill them, they ought to fulfill them. He writes the following:

> Another word for my philosophical colleagues who distinguish sharply between what we are and what we ought to be. What we can be = what we ought to be, and is much better language than ought to be. (1970, p. 272)

Maslow argues that since these needs form the very nature of man, these needs ought to be fulfilled.

> What a man can be, he must be. He must be true to his own nature. (1970, p. 46)

Yet whether these needs are part of the nature of man or whether man acquires them via experience is irrelevant to the claim that such needs ought to be met.

Maslow believes he has overcome the naturalistic fallacy by inserting the premise that conative needs are part of man's nature. What Maslow has failed to recognize is that many have claimed that violence and aggression are also true to man's nature. Young, for example, cites the following as needs of conative dispositions:

> The need to maintain one's status within the group, the need to win pre-eminence, the need to save one's face, the need to avenge an affront, and so on (1943, p. 150)

Surely we would not conclude that such needs ought to be fulfilled or gratified. At best, we would attempt to diffuse such needs, not gratify them.

Whatever man's natural needs may be, we cannot determine the goodness or badness of those needs simply by discovering their existence. For it is the ethical grounds, not the empirical grounds, which lead us to the conclusion that if man has a violent nature, that violent nature ought to be guarded against. And, if we find that man has a need for self-actualization, it will also be on ethical rather than empirical grounds that we conclude that this need ought to be fulfilled. The ethical grounds will almost always appeal to the "needs" of moral obligation.

Given that conative dispositions are motivational forces of behavior, what implications does the existence of such student needs have for

educators? For example, should a teacher capitalize on a student's needs by directing the student toward the proximate goal of learning the lesson? And, if a teacher finds that some students do not have such needs (yet believes that if they did, they would learn a great deal more), should s/he try to induce those needs in the students.

According to Clark L. Hull, all learning is motivated by need gratification. If this is the case, then it would seem impossible for a teacher to avoid satisfying and/or inducing student needs in the teacher-learner situation. William S. Sahakian's account of Hull's theory emphasizes the fact that Hull believed learning could not take place in the absence of need or drive reduction. He writes the following:

> Learning occurs, according to Hull, when and only when, a response is reinforced, reinforcement transpiring only when a drive is reduced. (1976, p. 134)

Hull's basic hypothesis is that all learning results from reinforcement of the organism's responses. However, no response from the environment will count as a reinforcement unless it is immediately followed by a reduction in the organism's drives or needs.

Suppose it is discovered that such needs, when they do exist in students, are effective motivational forces in learning. In fact, suppose that a teacher could create a learning environment in which learning-the-task is directly related to tension reduction. Should the teacher create such a situation, even when the students arrive in the classroom with these needs already well-engrained? This latter question is not open to empirical investigation, although it may arise from the empirical finding that those needs exist. Despite the origin of the question, its answers can only be determined on ethical grounds.

Given that Hull describes these needs as states of tension which must be reduced for the organism to achieve equilibrium, it is prima facie immoral to induce unnecessary anxiety in children, even if it does result in learning. On the other hand, if children are already in these need states, someone might rightly question why those needs should not be gratified by means of learning. In such a case, learning and need gratification may be simultaneous.

To all appearances, such a position seems perfectly reasonable. However, there may be more effective ways of gratifying children's needs; and postponing the gratification by creating a situation in which learning-the-task is the only means to need gratification may also be immoral. R. F. Dearden highlights this problem in the following passage:

> Whatever the virtues of Hull's elaborate theory may be in relation to the behavior of animals, the suggestion that the notion of 'need-reduction' has an application in the education of children has about it the appearance of being immoral, for by what right may a teacher artificially induce in children states of need marked by tensions only to be relieved on condition of performing some task? And if children should already be in such states of need, surely they ought to be attended to unconditionally? The fact that children are moral beings makes all the difference, compared with rats, as to how they may permissibly be motivated. (1972, p. 56)

Summary

Determining the needs of students may appear to be a plausible starting point for the formation and defense of educational objectives. However, the advantage that we, as educators, may acquire by this first step may be lost if we are not careful in distinguishing among the various kinds of needs which exist and how they relate to education. Confusing the various kinds of needs can only serve to impede the progress of any educational program. Different needs not only require different means of

gratification--i.e., to confuse the needs may be to confuse the means for their fulfillment (need fulfillment being the objective)--but different needs have different ethical implications and worth.

When educational evaluators focus only on the "needs" of desire, their needs-assessments will go awry in two serious ways: First, when the needs-assessments only take into account the "needs" of desire, the data accumulated will only disclose some, and not necessarily the most significant, of the needs of the constituents (e.g., the morally relevant needs).

Second, by gathering information only about the "needs" of desire, evaluators cannot fulfill the purpose they set for their endeavor: They cannot, from such data alone, determine defensible educational objectives. The mere fact that "needs" or desire exist, does not provide us as yet with either strong or conclusive reasons for fulfilling those needs. When determining defensible educational objectives, strong or conclusive reasons can only be derived from the "needs" of moral obligation and subsistence. Yet such a justification is ruled out in most needs-assessments; for the evaluator's focus is only on the "needs" of desire.

III: Needs-Assessment: A Critique of Prominent Views

At the outset of this paper, we presented some prominent views of educational needs-assessments and discussed the purpose for which they were developed. We then went on to show that various kinds of needs exist, and that not all needs may prove to be relevant to defending educational goals. In this section, we intend to show that the needs-assessment strategies, as presented by their authors, cannot serve the purpose for which they were developed. To show this, it will be useful to review briefly what evaluators and curriculum specialists have written about the purpose and method for conducting a needs-assessment.

Purpose

Evaluators and curriculum specialists have become atuned to the importance of establishing a sound foundation on which to formulate and defend educational objectives. In order to fulfill this purpose, they have recommended that defensible educational objectives can and should be formulated on the basis of student and community needs. Needs-assessment strategies, then, are supposed to enable educators to determine whether certain student and community needs exist, and to establish that fulfillment of those needs would constitute defensible educational objectives. Hopkins and Antes (1978), for example, stress that educational objectives should be derived from student needs.

> The aims or goals to be attained by students should be based on and generated from the needs of students. The goals which are set for students either individually or collectively are based on the needs to be served by the process of education and become the objectives. (Hopkins & Antes, p. 4, emphasis added)

John Burton and Paul Merrill also emphasize that needs-assessments be used for the purpose of revealing to educators the objectives that those educators ought to pursue.

> Needs assessment is the process of determining goals, measuring needs, and establishing priorities for action. Goals are defined as to what "ought to be," and needs as discrepancies between goals and current status. (1977, p. 39)

The implicit assumption underpinning this position has been that if a need exists, it ought to be fulfilled. This assumption is so central to educational needs-assessments, that some authors go so far as to define "needs" as "that which ought to be fulfilled." Burton and Merrill, for example, have taken this step. They write that "a need is present when there is a discrepancy between the way things 'ought to be' and the way they 'are.'" (1977, p. 24) On this view, then, if evaluators and curriculum specialists determine the existent student and community needs, they will have determined what ought to be done--i.e., they will have determined defensible educational objectives.

However, we have shown that various kinds of needs exist, only some of which imply that those needs ought to be fulfilled. Therefore, a needs-assessment which will disclose what ought to be pursued in education, will have to be a needs-assessment which addresses those needs whose fulfillment is justified and thereby defensible. For example, the "needs" of ethical obligation carry with them the implication that those needs ought to be fulfilled. The same implications can be derived from the "needs" of subsistence. In other words, whenever we find that such needs exist, we have prima facie reasons for fulfilling them. All other need-claims must be argued for on ethical grounds in order to justify the evaluator's and/or curriculum specialist's recommendation that a defensible educational objective is one which addresses the needs expressed in those need-claims. To determine whether educational needs-assessments, as presented in the literature on evaluation and instructional design, can

address these needs, we will review and critique some of the prominent views of educational needs-assessments.

A Review and Critique of Prominent Views

The first needs-assessment strategy which we will consider, and which is a popular one, is the one presented by James Popham. To quickly review, Popham writes that the

Desired status of learners	minus	Current status of learners	equals	An educational need.	(1975, p. 65)

Popham goes on to state that the first step in determining needs is that of preference data collection. He writes that:

> The most popular needs-assessment models emphasize the accumulation of a considerable amount of preference data, typically from a variety of different educational clienteles, such as pupils, teachers, and parents. This preference data deals with which educational goals various groups would most like to see a given instructional system achieve. (1975, p. 65)

The needs-assessor is to determine what the constituents want or prefer and then determine whether there is a disrepancy between the preferred or desired state of affairs and the actual state of affairs. In the end, the needs-assessment should enable evaluators to overcome what Popham calls their "real obstacle." For he writes that:

> The real obstacle is deciding on which objectives should be pursued. Because, as we have seen, evaluators are concerned with determining the worth of educational phenomena, they are called upon to help assess the merits of competing instructional goals. (Popham, 1975, p. 65)

> By first identifying what kinds of learner behavior we desire, then contrasting the learner's current behavior with what we desire, we can identify the gap between what we want and what we have....This is consistent with the general point of view that it is the mission of the school to promote worthwhile modifications in learners. (Popham, 1973, p. 4, emphasis added)

Here it is important to notice that Popham's model is designed in such a way as to yield only the "needs" of desire or preference. However, as we have shown, determining what the students and the community want or desire is not sufficient for determining what ought to be done (i.e., "the worthwhile modifications"). The evaluators and curriculum designers who have created and supported some version of this needs-assessment strategy have done so without realizing that their position rests on the assumption that the ethical implications of the "needs" of moral obligation and of the "needs" of subsistence carry over for the "needs" of desire. This assumption is false. In the following, Robert Stake expresses this assumption clearly. He writes:

> It is essentially impractical to consider needs by separately considering actual status and desired status. Both should be considered simultaneously, relating both to particular learning tasks, and particular curricula. When one inquires about status (as we have in CSSE) it is difficult not to learn about need directly. Students, teachers, citizens, and others are quick to follow answers about the present status of teaching and learning with information about what the status should be. They speak of problems. They speak directly of needs. (1977, p. 19)

Stake's concern is with the temporal order in which evaluators take desires and actual status into consideration. However, he overlooks the problem that stems from the assumption that what ought to be done follows simply from what is desired.

If it is determined that a student's need conforms to Popham's analysis--i.e., the desired status of the learner minus the current status of the learner--one must still provide good reasons for fulfilling that need. The presence of a discrepancy between what is desired and what actually exists, will not, by itself, supply us with an adequate justification. In the Evaluation News (October, 1978, p. 12), Michael Scriven

calls attention to this "defect" when he considers various versions of the discrepancy analysis of needs. Yet Scriven goes one step further. He claims that unmet desires are not "needs" at all.

> I would now argue that this move, though logically sound, won't save the definition since it has two other defects. First, it fails to distinguish "needs" from "what it would be nice to have" (the technical term is "desiderata"). This point can be handled by going to a different definition, though still a discrepancy one, by defining need as the gap between actual and the minimum satisfactory level (MSL). The gap between MSL and ideal is not a <u>need</u> but a desideratum. (1978, p. 12)

Whether or not one takes the "need" of desire to be a legitimate sense of "need" is not of central importance here. The important point is that even when it is granted that "unmet desires" are "needs," they are not, by themselves, the kinds of needs whose fulfillment constitute <u>defensible</u> or <u>justified</u> educational objectives.

This latter point becomes especially clear when we consider the desires of a racist or a fascist. The fact that a fascist desires the elimination of "inferior races" (desired status) coupled with the fact that those races still exist (actual or current status) <u>should not</u> incline us to conclude that that "need" ought to be fulfilled. Yet according to the needs-assessment strategy, all the criteria for the existence of an "educational need" have been satisfied (and therefore all the criteria for a "worthwhile" objective). Yet the fact that such cases satisfy all the criteria of the needs-assessment strategy shows that the strategy is incomplete or seriously flawed. The needs-assessment strategy that is required in education must provide criteria better suited to determining the defensible aims of education--criteria which will lead to data gathering of a more complete and rigorous nature.

The present needs-assessment strategies, however, provide no safeguards or guidelines for determining which desires ought to be fulfilled. The only guidelines set forth are those which allow us to determine wherein lies the greatest discrepancy between the desired state of affairs and the actual state of affairs. However, neither the size of a discrepancy, nor the mere presence of a discrepancy, constitutes a worthwhile objective (just as the size of the discrepancy between the state of affairs desired by the fascist and the actual state of affairs does not allow us to conclude that what the fascist desires ought to be fulfilled). In fact, what the fascist desires is neither defensible nor worthwhile, but, rather, immoral.

It is important to note that Popham (1975) also offered another position by the end of his discussion of needs-assessments. Having considered some of the problems which arise from the first position he presented (i.e., the problems of determining, in certain troublesome cases, whether the preference value is more important than the discrepancy value, or vice versa, p. 69), Popham concluded that the information derived from such a needs-assessment strategy might not suffice. Needs-assessments may identify certain educational needs, but, in the end, Popham said, the "more enlightened judgments" of the decision makers would be required to determine the "worth of various educational objectives" (1975, p. 69).

> All that needs assessment is designed to do is to gather a reasonable number of judgmental inputs from different concerned groups, then coalesce these inputs so they can be meaningfully interpreted. Decision-makers having access to such information ought to be able to make more enlightened judgments as to the worth of various educational objectives.

Unfortunately, Popham fails to specify the criteria and standards for what counts as an enlightened judgment. Popham also fails to argue why the decision maker should be allowed to make such judgments. Surely some defense

is needed, for other writers such as Worthen and Sanders do not believe that the decision makers' preferences are always logical, rational, or intelligent revelations of value (Worthen & Sanders, 1973, p. 26). What is required here is a defense of the criteria and standards by which judgments can be determined as enlightened.

The second kind of needs-assessment strategy which we will consider was presented by Stephen P. Klein in his article, "Choosing Needs for Needs Assessment." Klein's model addresses the point that Popham raised at the end of his discussion of needs-assessment, viz., the role of experts' judgments. In the following excerpt, Klein presents the four steps which he maintains are essential to every needs-assessment. However, he differs from Popham with regard to who should participate in each step of the needs-assessment.*

> Although there are a number of important procedural differences between conducting needs assessments at different levels in the educational system, all needs assessments should include four basic activities:
>
> 1. Listing the full range of possible goals (or objectives) that might be involved in the needs assessment.
>
> 2. Determining the relative importance of the goals (or objectives).
>
> 3. Assessing the degree to which the important goals (or objectives) are being achieved by the program (i.e., identifying the discrepancies between desired and actual performance).
>
> 4. Determining which of the discrepancies between present and desired performance are the ones most important to correct." (1971, p. 1-2)

*It should be noted that there is disagreement as to who should participate in the preference data collection process. In other words, whose preferences should be taken into account? The disagreement in this area stems from the disagreement over who is supposed to be served by evaluation. For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Ellett, Fenstermacher, and Shumener, "Philosophical Remarks about Educational Evaluation," FWPES, 1978.

The primary difference between the strategies of Klein and Popham is that the "range of objectives" is not determined by the preference ratings of concerned individuals. Rather, in Klein's model, a team of experts establish the full range of possible objectives and then present them to the appropriate parties in order to acquire the order of importance (priority) of those pre-specified objectives.

> In other words, the strategy we are proposing is to have experts construct the full range of potential goals that might be included, and then to achieve community, student, and teacher involvement by having these groups participate in the selection of the goals which will be considered in the needs assessment. (Klein, 1971, p. 3, emphasis added)

However, there is something problematic about Klein's proposal to replace community involvement in goal construction with the efforts of a team of experts. It is interesting, too, that Klein's reason for introducing the team of experts at this stage of the needs-assessment is expediency, i.e., the conservation of time, money, and manpower. The argument he uses is intended to appeal to the practical-minded reader. He argues that we should not waste too much time debating the worth of goals. Instead, Klein argues that the layman's time would be spent more wisely when used to aid in the construction of educational programs (p. 5). Nonetheless, a number of serious problems come to mind when considering Klein's suggestion.

First, who are to be considered as the experts? Determining possible objectives implicitly requires making moral judgments. Is there a group of professionals whose expertise is that of making defensible moral judgments? Moral issues (or normative issues) are of a different nature than empirical issues. It is true that there are certain experts in the field of education who can thoroughly describe what is taking place in our educational institutions. It is not so clear, however, that these

social scientists or psychologists are in any special position to determine what ought to be taking place. Educational experts are in a logically awkward position when the questions they attempt to answer are normative questions dealing with the worth of educational objectives, standards, and norms.

A response that might be given is that the experts do not have to determine which educational objectives are important. All they have to do is provide the "full range of possible goals (or objectives)." Klein's writing is sufficiently vague to make such a response seem plausible. However, the problem remains. On the one hand, the full range of possible objectives is infinite and hence impossible to delimit. If it were possible to list the full range of possible objectives, Klein would be right when claiming that:

> The total list of goals is not, therefore, a prescription as to which goals the school should try to achieve; rather, it is a varied bill of fare from which the appropriate judges can pick and choose the goals they feel are the most relevant. (1971, p. 7)

Such a list, if it were a real possibility, would be descriptive. Unfortunately, there are infinite possibilities. Therefore, Klein is setting an impossible task for the experts. On the other hand, if delimiting the full range of possible objectives is practically impossible, then to make sense of Klein's recommendation, we have to assume that the list of goals set by the experts would have to be a limited range of possible objectives. Constructing a list of only a limited range of the possible objectives entails that some selection is being made; and if it is the expert's list, that selection will have to be made on the basis of the (implicit or explicit) value judgments of those experts.

Once again, we must ask from where these social scientists or psychologists are deriving their expertise of normative issues. In other words, can these social scientists or psychologists handle normative issues in such a way as to ensure that the most defensible and most rational value judgments have been made? We think not. For as we argued earlier, the expertise of social scientists and psychologists rests in the domain of describing empirical phenomena, not in resolving normative issues or questions of worth.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that, on Klein's model, the entire structure of a needs-assessment will be determined by the experts' selection of the goals to be considered. It will be from the experts' list of objectives that preference ratings and discrepancy ratings will be formed. And the objectives formulated on the basis of such a needs-assessment will thereby also be largely determined by what the experts have judged worthy of consideration. In other words, only the objectives presented by the experts--objectives based on the experts' value judgments--will be taken into account in determining defensible educational objectives. R. F. Dearden has presented a serious criticism of the role of social scientists in resolving the normative issues arising from need-claims. What Dearden says in the context of particular need-claims, however, also applies to Klein's suggestion that social scientists determine the general, but limited, range of possibilities (objectives) to be considered in a needs assessment.

> Questions as to desirable standards, proper functioning, desirable rules or what appropriateness and efficiency are cannot be determined by observation and experiment, though this does not mean that they are arbitrary or insusceptible of being reasoned about. It does mean, however, that conflicts of opinion may be very intractable and that since

> decisions may be involved, not just discoveries, we are bound to ask by what authority sociologists, psychologists, and specialists of other sorts presume to settle for us questions of need. (1971, p. 52)

Klein also makes a serious mistake when he recommends the second step (Step 2) of the needs-assessment--i.e., determining the relative importance of the goals (or objectives). Klein's problem in this area is similar to problems in those strategies which rely solely on preference data. Klein differs from someone like Popham in that he does not determine which objectives are defensible by gathering preference ratings (i.e., by considering only the "needs" of desire). Rather, he recommends that preference data ("needs" of desire) be used to determine the relative importance of the objectives.

> The total list of goals is not, therefore, a prescription as to which goals the school should try to achieve; rather, it is a varied bill of fare from which the appropriate judges can pick and choose the goals they feel are the most relevant. Thus, the emphasis is placed upon schools selecting which goals they wish to assess rather than on trying to construct just those goals in which they are most interested. (1971, p. 7)

It seems plausible to hold that the only conditions under which preference ratings (or the "needs" of desire) can justifiably determine the relative importance of available objectives is when all of the objectives are shown to be equally important in the relevant respects. If Klein can show that all of the objectives presented by the experts are equally important and defensible, then he might have a strong case for claiming that an appeal to preferences is justifiable in determining the relative importance of those objectives. However, it is unlikely, and it has not been shown, that all of the objectives are equally important and defensible; and since what is preferred is not necessarily what is most important, preference ratings, or the "needs" of desire, will not suffice.

Our point, then, is that additional strategies and principles will have to be supplied in order to determine whether or not the "needs" of desire play a role in determining defensible educational objectives. We are not saying that a desired objective cannot be defensible; we are saying that a desired objective must be shown to be defensible. An appeal to the "needs" of desire, coupled with the estimation that a discrepancy exists between the actual and the desired state of affairs, will not enable us to justify and defend the claim that the needs-assessment has resulted in disclosing a set of defensible educational goals.

Unlike James Popham and Stephen Klein, who present strategies which focus solely or mainly on the "needs of desire," John Burton and Paul Merrill (1977) propose a needs-assessment which would address five kinds of social needs: normative needs, felt needs, expressed needs, comparative needs, and future needs (pp. 22-23). Their needs-assessment is also a discrepancy model; yet the discrepancy is supposed to be between "what ought to be" and "what actually is." They add that the discrepancy is the need.

> A goal is a statement of what ought to be. It follows then that needs assessment is the process of determining what ought to be (goals) and measuring the amount of discrepancy between what ought to be and what actually is (needs). (1977, p. 26)

Although Burton and Merrill discuss four kinds of needs, they make no mention of the "needs" of moral obligation or of the "needs" of subsistence. Nevertheless, they claim that a need is a discrepancy between "what ought to be" and "what is."

Burton and Merrill have not committed the error of focusing on only one type of need, but they have committed the error of assuming that because there exists a discrepancy between "an individual's or group's

present state and some given norm or standard," or between "what a person wants and what he/she has" or between "what one group has and what another group, with similar characteristics, has" that a need is thereby constituted (p. 24). Yet simply determining that a discrepancy exists will not yield goals which ought to be met. What Burton and Merrill fail to take into account is that unmet standards or unmet desires do not, by themselves, imply that those standards or desires ought to be satisfied. Ethical justification is required to show that such standards and/or desires ought to be met. Only when ethical considerations are made an integral part of needs-assessments, will evaluators and curriculum specialists be in a position to fulfill the purpose of those needs-assessments; for the purpose, as Burton and Merrill state it, is the following:

> Needs assessment is a systematic process for determining goals, identifying discrepancies between goals and the status quo, and establishing priorities for action. With respect to education, needs assessment is a process for determining what should be taught. (1977, p. 21)

Other writers on educational evaluation and curriculum design have offered views which move away from a heavy reliance on the "needs" of desire to a reliance on needs which are more closely related to the "needs" of moral obligation and the "needs" of subsistence. Robert Gagné and Leslie Briggs suggest that determining defensible educational objectives is linked with determining the needs of society. (1974, pp. 19-20)

> The basic reason for designing instruction is to make possible the attainment of a set of educational goals. The society in which we live has certain functions to perform in serving the needs of its people. Many of these functions--in fact, most of them--require human activities which must be learned. Accordingly, one of the functions of a society is to insure that such learning takes place. Every society, in one way or another, makes provision for the education of people in order that the variety of functions necessary for its survival can be carried out. Educational goals are those human activities which contribute to the functioning of a society (including the functioning of an individual in the society), and which can be acquired through learning. (Emphasis added)

There is much to be said for such a view, but there is an important ambiguity in the statement. On the one hand, there are those things which are necessary for the survival of any society whatsoever. On the other hand, there are those things which are necessary for the survival of a particular society. In particular, there are those things which are necessary for the survival of a democratic as opposed to a fascist society. And here we are assuming that it can be shown that people ought to have a democratic society. Thus, Gagné and Brigg's view merely hides the fact that moral justification is required for the claim that we ought to take steps to help a particular society survive. After all, some societies rightly require changing.

We do believe that Gagné and Briggs are on the right track to specifying one important element in determining defensible educational goals. We believe that incorporating the political theory concept of "interest" into the process will enable one to move towards determining defensible educational goals. (The concept of interest cannot be defined purely in terms of wants or desires.) The relation between "interest" and "morality" is close. As Kurt Baier has put it, "By the moral point of view we mean a point of view which furnishes a court of arbitration for conflicts of interests" (Baier, 1965, p. 96). In another essay, we will develop and defend the view that determining defensible educational goals is essentially connected with considering interests. If such a view is sound, then one has a justifiable way of modifying and supplementing those needs-assessment strategies which fail to mention or to consider interests.

Conclusion

Educational evaluators and curriculum specialists have set out to formulate and to determine defensible educational objectives by means of needs-assessment strategies. We have briefly discussed the prominent needs-assessment strategies and have shown that the strategies rely solely or mainly on determining what it is that various people desire. That is, the strategies rely on the "needs" of desire.

We have analyzed need-claims and have argued that there are various kinds of needs-claims: (1) the "need" of obligation, (2) the "need" of subsistence, (3) the "need" of required means, (4) the "need" of useful means, (5) the "need" of desire, and (6) the "need" of conative disposition. We have argued that only certain "needs" have ethical implications about what ought to be done, and that from the fact that a need of desire exists it does not follow that it ought to be fulfilled.

We have concluded that since prominent needs-assessment strategies rely solely or mainly on the needs of desire, these strategies cannot determine defensible educational objectives. Different techniques and principles must be incorporated into the strategies in order to determine defensible goals. Without modification, the prominent needs-assessment strategies do not suffice because they cannot establish defensible educational goals.

Since the ultimate worth of an educational program depends on the worth of its objectives, one who has no way to determine the worth (or defensibility) of the objectives has no way to determine the worth (or defensibility) of the program itself. Clearly, then, the prominent needs-assessment strategies stand in urgent need of modification and reformation.

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